
* "THE STEW BUM" *

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"THE STEW BUM"

CAST

JOSEPHUS MOWRY THE OLD STEW BUM.
JOE MOWRY JR. JUVENILE
COUSIN ELIJAH CHARACTER HEAVY

MARGOT MOWRY CHARACTER
MINNIE COMEDY
PHYLISS MOWRY INGENUE LEAD

SETTING

The interior of The Mowry living room. Doors on the L.
and the R. Simple but homelike.

PROPS

Table

Wall clock

Express stocks

Half pint of liquor

Beer hose and siphon

One hundred hundred dollar bills, stage money

Corn cob pipe for Josephus

Suit case with clothes in it

Old fashioned photograph

Newspaper,

"THE STEW BUM"

(BELL RINGS OFF R. PHYLISS ENTERS FROM L. CALLS OFF L.) Never mind, Mother, I'll answer it. (GOES TO D. R. COUSIN ELIJAH ENTERS) Oh it's you, Cousin Elijah, come right in. I'll call mother right away.

COUSIN

I just came over to see how you folks were getting along? Is your mother all right, Phylliss?

PHYLISS

Just the same as ever--this household is just the same, and I'm just the same except that I'm going to get married to Sam Lawler.

MARGOT

(ENTERS L.) Oh it's you is it, Cousin Elijah. So glad you came over Just sit right down and make yourself at home. How's your bank and business?

COUSIN

Oh just so, just so. (SITS DOWN AND LOOKS ABOUT) (SNIFFS) My goodness what is that odor I smell, Marget? It seems very much like the odor of alcohol.

PHYLISS

I wonder what it could be, mother---I've been smelling it for the last half hour. It's enough to make one dizzy.

MARGOT

Oh I'll bet it's that good cook of ours. She's been makin' home brew, and I've told her and told her. (CALLS OFF L.) Minnie! Minnie! Come in here at once. (MINNIE ENTERS L. WITH A BEER SIPHON AND HOSE) Minnie, are you making home-brew out there in my kitchen again? (SNATCHES SIPHON FROM HER) You are, aren't you? Look at this! How many times have I told you and that no good husband of mine that I've got a respectable home and I don't want it made into a brewery or distillery. Hagen't I told you not to make home-brew in my kitchen?

MINNIE

Yes mum, and I'm not makin' it in the kitchen if you please. I'm makin' it in the cellar. (NOISE OFF STAGE OF PARROT TALKING "IT'S ALWAYS GOOD WEATHER WHEN GOOD FELLOWS GET TOGETHER. DAMN IT GIVE ME A DRINK.")

MARGOT

Oh mercy. What is that swearing? Is that that parrot of yours?

MINNIE

Yes mum. That's my George Washington. I'd better go tend to him or he'll swear worse.

JOE

(ENTERS L. LAUGHING) Say, Minnie, you better go get your parrot he's out of his cage and is sitting on the window sill asking everybody that goes by for a drink. (MINNIE)

MARGOT

(GIVES MINNIE BACK SIPHON AND GETS EXCITED) Oh my goodness, go stop him at once. (MINNIE EXITS L.) Oh dear, between her and that parrot that drinks and swears and your father, children, I'm just about done up.

(PUTS ARMS AROUND HER) Poor mother. Don't let it fret you. Where's dad?

MARGOT

Where he's been ever since he sold his garage business six months ago --over to that Al Fliegle's gamblin' place, a drinkin' and spendin' ever cent of the money he's earned for the last twenty five years. In another six months we won't have a dime.

COUSIN

Is that so, Margot--you know I came over here to find out just how Josephus was acting---he's certainly not holding up the respectable name of this family.

MARGOT

Oh I know he's not. He's a disgrace--here's my poor daughter Phyllis with a man who's crazy about her and he's afraid to ask her to marry him just an account of the old stew bum she has for a father. That's what the people in the town are calling Josephus. The old stew bum! And He don't seem to care, not in the least.

COUSIN

Well, Josephus always was a heavy drinking man.

MARGOT

Oh he wasn't so bad before prohibition but now he's been so busy huntin' liquor that he can't find any time to work. He hasn't done a thing since he sold his garage business but loaf and gamble and drink and now he's about out of funds and around trying to get me to sell them shares of stock I got in the Continental Express Company. My poor dead father gave me them years ago and through thick and thin I've hung on to them plannin' on them to keep me when I'm too old and worn out to keep myself, and now that old bum would have me sell them. Think of it!

COUSIN

Well, now, Margot, if you do become too hard up, you know I would be willing to take that stock off your hands myself--you know justas an accomodation.

MARGOT

No thanks, Cousin Elijah, I'm going to hold on to it as long as I can I've always had faith in it, and so did my father, and so did Phyllis young man that she's going to marry. And then too my boy, Joe wants me to hold on to them, don't you, dear. (PUTS ARMS AROUND JOE) And Joe ought to know for sain't he in the bond business? Oh, Cousin Elima I'm mighty proud of Joe---he's going to be something in spite of the no good father he's got. (OFF STAGE R. JOSEPHUS SINGS "ROCK OF AGES") Listen, there comes the old stew bum now.

JOSEPHUS

(ENTERS. SLOPPILY HALF DRUNK JOVIAL SMILE SMILES AT ALL OF THEM SINGS LITTLE OF ROCK OF AGES AND BREAKS OF) Hello--sooks--I mean folks! Rock of Ages.

MARGOT

I'd think you'd be ashamed to sing that song!

JOSEPHUS

Why so, ma? I never had nothin' agaisn the old time religion. Three things I always held by--the old-time religion and calomel and straigh whiskey. They got more kick in 'em than of these here new fangled notions. Don't you think so,

Elijah?

COUSIN
(PRIMLY) I'm no authority on drinking, Josephus. I have always heeded the injunction to beware of the wine cup.

JOSEPHUS

Well, so have I--I always bewared of wine and beer and them soft drinks. I always stuck to hard liquour.

MARGOT

Yes, Josephus, you've stuck to hard liquour more than you have to hard labor.

JOSEPHUS

Now, Margot, aint I always been a good provider to you? Ain't I pervided you with a couple of children to work for you? Besides, the good book says--

MARGOT

You! Talking of the good book!

JOSEPHUS

Why not, Margot? I know it from cover to cover, Margot, and it was wrote for sinners, wasn't it? Well, I'm a sinner, aint I?

MARGOT

You are!

JOSEPHUS

You bet your life I be. I'm a regular mammal of iniquity, to hear your prohibition friends tell it I am.

PHYLISS

(LAUGHS) Oh dad you ought to brace up and quit drinking. Honestly folks, will begin to talk about you and I don't want them to do that. (TURNS) Well, mother, I've got to be going to work. See you when I get home. Goodbye, Cousin Elijah. (EXITS R.)

MARGOT

(AS JOSEPHUS SITS DOWN RATHER LAZILY) Look at you. Ain't you ashamed of yourself to be lettin' your daughter go to work like she does, and you sit around and do nothin'--- You lazy good for nothing--

JOSEPHUS

Now, Ma, I'm inclined to argue that point. I ain't lazy jest cause I sit around and think all the time. Now ma, right now my mind is workin' on a great ~~bad~~^{good} invention. That's all I do, ma, now is think about my inventions--inventions that some day are going to make us so rich that I'll be carrying hatfuls of hundred dollar bills. Even now I'm working on a Deee vice that'll--revovel inotize the automobile industry. What do you think of it, Cousin Elijah?

COUSIN

I'm afraid I can't approve of any inventions that are the work of a drunkard, Josephus.

JOSEPHUS

(TAKES OUT BOTTLE) Aw now--Cousin Elijah, better have a little shot before you go down to the bank! This is good stuff. (OFFERS MIT TO HI

COUSIN

No and I do not thank you for insulting me with y our offer of the

insidious vitrol. My interests don't run that way.

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JOSEPHUS

NO, Cousin Elijah, your interest don't run that way--- they run to prayin' on Sunday and foreclosin' mortgages on Monday, don't they?

COUSIN M

Marget, I'll come over and talk to you when this set of husband is not at home. I want to talk to you about those stocks y cu've got. Josephus, I am sorry for you. You are on the road to hell.

JOSEPHUS

You and me both, brother. (COUSIN ELIJAH EXITS INSULTED)

JOE

Aw, gee, dad, you've insulted, Cousin Elijah. Now he'll be sore at us for a week. It might pay you to be more friendly with him. You know he's got money and I suppose he would help us if we needed it.

JOSEPHUS

If we needed it? Humph! Son, your old dad wouldn't ask that hypocrit for it if --if--I was dyin' for a drink and couldn't get it. Besides who said we needed money.

JOE

Well, I--I need some money--I need it badly and I need it right away. But then I guess there isn't any chance of getting anything as long as your liquor holds out.

JOSEPHUS

Liq our, Joe, can always be got by them that have a feelin' for liquor. It ain't so much a question of cash as a question of the kind of person you be. There's Cousin Elijah. His mind's set on money, and money tags after him and crawls into his lap like a pet kitten. And here's your dad. Your dad just natcharllly finds liq our flowin' his way. What you want with extra money, Joe. You aint got tied up with none of them wild women that the good book tells about, have ye?

MARGOT

Why of course not. And don't you dare even suggest such things about my darling boy Joe. (PUTS ARMS AROUND JOE)

JOSEPHUS

That's right, ma--take your darling boy's side always. You've spoiled him, ma. You've petted him till he's got no moral staminy or will power left.

MARGOT

(SARCASTIC) And you have!

JOSEPHUS

(TRYING TO HONEY UP TO HER AS HE BEGINS SPEECH) Of course I have, Marget. (SHI TURNS AWAY) What do you think kept me drinkin' if it t'wasn't my will power? I been gagged and prayed against for thirty years to make me quit, and there was times I really wanted to quit but my will power always held me to it. (TO JOE) But go ahead Joe, if you figger you just got to have money---why maybe your ma will let you sell them Confidential Express Company stocks she's got.

MARGOT

I will not. I won't let go of them for anybody--not even Joe as muc as I love him. Don't mention them any more (EXITS.)

JOSEPHUS
Your ma is kinda out of sorts againt, Joe. Well, that means another drink. (TAKES DRINK)

MINNIE

(ENTERS L.) Shhh. Mr. Mowry--would you care to come down and sample some home-made gin?

JOSEPHUS

Well, now--Minnie--I'd be delighted--but is it properly aged yet?

MINNIE

Oh my goodness yes--sir--it's almost three hours bld. I gave some to my parrot and it didn't kill him yet. He's singin' and jest as happy.

JOSEPHUS

Well, I guess I better go down and look into that. (SLAPS JOE ON THE BACK) Now, Joe, my boy don't worry about money--some day your father is going to be rich Joe--just as soon as I get my invention fixed up. (EXITS SINGING ROCK OF AGES) (MINNIE EXITS TOO)

JOE

Oh what's the use? There's no one I can turn to. (SITS DOWN HOLDS HEAD) God. I don't know what I'm going to do.

COUSIN ELIJAH

(ENTERS R.) Oh hello, Joe--I just came back to talk to your mother about them stocks of hers. What's the matter, Joe, you seem to be worried or troubled.

JOE

I am, Cousin Elijah---I'm in terrible trouble---I need money and I need it the worst sort of way. or I'm going to lose my job and everything.

COUSIN ELIJAH

Joe, I hope you're not going to tell me that you're short in your accounts.

JOE

Listen, I'm in a hell of a fix if somebody doesn't come across with some cash in six or eight days--it means jail for me--jail! The auditor is due in six or eight days and I'm short two thousand dollars But if I can get twelve or fourteen hundred dollars I can play my tip that I got on the stock market and square the shortage and then have enough money to repay the loan.

COUSIN

You've got to all figured out like a Napoleon of Finance. Joe, have you told your folks about the trouble you are in?

JOE

No! No! I couldn't tell mother. I couldn't!. Oh, Cousin Elijah, you've got the money--you've got plenty--can't you help me?

COUSIN

Well, Joe, I always have believed in the golden rule of business. I do onto others as they do on to me, and whenever I wanted to get any money I always had to have something to put up--you know--collateral Now, Joe, if you could get your mother to turn loose of that Continental Express Company stock, I'd be willing to give you twelve hundred for it.

JOE
You're pretty anxious to get ahold of that stock aren't you, Cousin Elijah?

COUSIN
Oh I don't know--now--Joe you've got your mother's power of attorney haven't you?

JOE
Yes. I attend to all her business for her--payments on the house and everything.

COUSIN
Well, you could take that stock out of the clock there where she keeps it and turn it over to me, then I would give you thirteen hundred dollars for it, a dn--

JOE
Thirteen hundred--you've raised --you offered twelve hundred first.

COUSIN
If you did find the stock in your hands you could use it and have it right back in the clock there almost before Margot realized she'd lent it to you, couldn't you? Now if you're so sure you've got a real tip on the market, why you know what you can do. Now of course I'm a Christian man and I wouldn't tell nobody to steal, but then if you wanted too--you could just borrow that stock from your mother. (PATS HIM ON THE BACK) Well, I must be going. Joe, I hope everything turns out all right, and I know it will. And when you do borrow that stock of hers bring it back to me. I'll pay you fourteen hundred dollars for it. Good night! (EXITS R.)

JOE
Good night! (THINKS A WHILE. GOES TO CLOCK. TURNS AWAY AS THOUGH HE WON'T DO IT THEN SUDDENLY OPENS CLOCK AND TAKES MONEY AND JUMPS IT IN HIS COAT POCKET)

PHYLLIS
(OFF R.) Oh Mother! Mother! (JOE EXITS L. QUICKLY. PHYLISS ENTERS)
Mother, where are you?

MARGOT
(ENTERS R.) Here I am, dear. What is it?

PHYLISS
He's proposed! He asked me to marry him--and we are going to have the wedding next month--isn't it wonderful--mother.

MARGOT
Yes, darling. I'm so happy. Now I'm just going to have all kinds of work to do getting ready for it. Phylliss, there's something I've been saving for you all these years. It's a brooch of pearls my grandmother gave to me, and I've kept them in this old clock along with my express stocks. Now that you're engaged I'm going to give it to you. (OPENS CLOCK. GIVES A GASP) Oh! Oh! It's gone! It's gone! My stock is gone. (JOSEPHUS ENTERS SINGING ROCK OF AGES WELL CROOKED NOW AND HE STAGGERS ABOUT THE ROOM DUMBLY) Josephus Mowry, what have you got to say for yourself?

JOSEPHUS
(DRUNKENLY) All I've got to say is, honey, that new gin that Minnie made has got a kick like a Missouri Jackass. (STAGGERS OUT SINGING ROCK OF AGES AS MRS. MOWRY CRIES AND PHYLISS COMFORTS HER)

***** NUMBER ONE *****

(JOSEPHUS IS DISCOVERED SITTING DEJECTEDLY WITH A HALF PINT BOTTLE EMPTY IN HIS HAND AND TRYING TO SMOKE A PIPE WHICH HE DOESN'T SEEM TO ENJOY)(PHYLISS ENTERS)

PHYLISS

What's the matter, dad?

JOSEPHUS

I'm worried, honey, about your ma--she aint actin' right lately. She seems to be gettin' colder and colder twoard me. You know aht it is?

PHYLISS

Why I don't know, dad, unless--unless it's the disappearance of those stocks.

JOSEPHUS

Phyliess! You don't think your ma really believes I stole 'em do you?

PHYLISS

Oh I don't know , dadkkkkkkkk Now I don't think you would ever do such a thing - -unless--unless--you'd been drinking. (GIGGLE)

JOS EPHUS

(HURT) Well, I'll be hornswagglid. They think I took them durn stocks. (MARGOT ENTERS) Margot, you're thinkin' things of me you hadn't arter think.

MARGOT

Josephus, these last few years I don't know what to think of you.

JOS EPHUS

Margot, I aint been no good I'll agree, I been a gambler and a whiskey guzzler, but where money was concerned I always been honest-- Margot,--Margot, you don't believe I took them stocks for myself do you?

MARGOT

I don't know what you took them for, Josephus, I just know they're gone. Oh I don't want to believe it, but-- (URNS AWAY. AFFLICTED)

JOS EPHUS

Margot, don't--don't believe nothin' that hurts you that much to believe. (PETS HER: SHE FREES HERSELF)

MARGOT

No! Don't try to wheedle and honey up to me. If you try that I'll know it's true. That's wlawya been your way. To honey up to me and make me believe black is white. And I've always let you because--

JOS EPHUS

Because you kind o' like it, Margot?

MARGOT

I never liked stayng mad at you. (HE MAKES FOR HER BUT SHE STOPS HIM) No! Not this time. You've hurt me too much this time.

JOS EPHUS

Then you do think--you really think--

PHYLISS

(INTERRUPTING) No no dad. She doesn't. Mother tell him you don't.

JOS EPHUS

Yes she does , P

And it looks as if there wasn't anything to do but let her think 8
it till she gets through thinkin' it--I'm gonna go. I'm gonna get
me a job somewhere--or something. The good book says there ain't
any use wastin' your sweetness on the desert air. I'm gonna pack
This is too much. If ~~think~~ it was some men this kind o' treatment
would drive 'em to drink. (HE EXITS L.)

PHYLISS

Oh, Mother--will he really go?

MARGOT

He'll come back--when his money's gone. He always has. And I've
always forgiven him.

PHYLISS

But can't you forgive him now? If he goes that will make things
worse. Mother, I'm going to tell him he mustn't go!

MARGOT

No! Maybe he will get a job when he has spent everything he has.
And a job will be good for him. Oh, Phyliess, he's my bad boy---
my bad little grown-up boy. And I've never known how to manage him
If he wants to leave now--let him go!

JOSEPHUS

(ENTERS R. GOES OVER TO MARGOT) Margot--I--I'm going--I--I kindo'
wish ye'd help me sort my things out. I don't want to take nothin'
made from this house that don't belong to me. I might be accused of
stealin'.

MARGOT

Very well, Josephus--I'll go in and get out the suitcase. (EXITS L.)

PHYLISS

Oh daddy, I don't want you to go. Listen, we really don't think you
stole them stocks--that is--not exactly---

JOSEPHUS

No, but the stocks are missin' and be cause I'm the human derelict of
this here family, I'm the one to be blamed. Your ma thinks me guilty
She said a lot mean things about me, but I never thought she'd accus
me of bein' a dirty low down theif--

PHYLISS

Oh mother's wrong--daddy--all wrong---but you've been such a weakin
--she's always had to be the boss. Sometimes I think it would have
been better daddy, if you have taken me and turned her over your knee
lifted up her dress and spanked her.

JOSEPHUS

I tied that once, honey--I turned your ma over my knee lifted up her
dress--and--and then I forgot what I was ~~mak~~ mad about. (THEY EXIT)

***** NUM BER TWO *****

JOSEPHUS

(ENTERS WITH SUIT CASE HAT AND COAT ON. MARGOT FOLLOWS HIM. SHE IS
HALF IN TEARS) Well--good bye, Margot-- I--reckon I be going now.

MARGOT

(CATCHING HOLD OF HIM) Oh, Josephus, wait--I--where are you going?

JOSEPHUS

JOSAPHUS
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Oh--I don't know. I'm gonna kinda look around--see what I can see.

MARGOT

But, Josephus, who's gonna see that you change to your heavy woolen underwear when the time comes, and who'll darn your socks, and -

JOSAPHUS

Oh don't worry about that, Margot--I'll get along all right.

MARGOT

Oh, Josephus, I can't bear to think of you lookin' around for jobs here and there--wandering around--and it'll be cold this winter and you'll be sleepin' alone--maybe in the street. Oh, Josephus what ever you've done--

JOSAPHUS

Now don't tell me whatever I've done I can stay here, Margot. I wouldn't want a pardon wrote for me for something I hadn't done. And I wouldn't look to be acquitted for something I had done. I'm goin' -and there aint no use talkin' (PICKS UP SUITCASE IT FALLS OPEN. SOME SHIRTS TIES AND A CORKSCREW FALL OUT ALSO A PHOTOGRAPH. MARGOT PICKS IT UP. HE GLANCES AT IT A LITTLE SHEEPISHLY) That--that's a photygraph we had taken when we was on our weddin' trip, Margot. I always sorta kept it--I--

MARGOT

Oh, Josephus--it's me--when I was a girl--

JOSAPHUS

You was a party girl then, Margot. Look at them bangs you wore then and that bustle--

MARGOT

And there's you in that high standin' collar and the prince albert coat you wore--Oh Josephus that was taken at Niagra Falls when we was on our honeymoon. Do you remember our first night together--we stopped at that hotel---we got the bridal suite--and it had twins beds--and--

JOSAPHUS

And we only used one of 'em. I remember I was a traveling salesmen in those days.

MARGOT

(ROMANTICALLY) Oh, Josephus, do you--do you remember that first night

JOSAPHUS

I should say I do--you and me was in that room together--our first night--about two in the morning--somebody knocked on the door--and I got absent minded and jumped out the window! Here, honey, you--you can keep that pitcher if you want it. (HE FUMBLERS WITH IT MAN CLOSE SUIT CASE AND STARTS FOR DOOR.)

MARGOT

Oh don't go--you mustn't go. I was wrong! I was wrong! I know I wa wrong. I never meant what I said--

JOSAPHUS

Never-the-less you said it, and I'm goin'. (UP TO D. R.)

MARGOT

(IN TEARS) Oh I can't bear to see you go. Joe! Phyliss! Somebody help me keep him here. (EXITS CRYING L.)

Now aint that touchin'? I ought to have a drink on that.

MINNIE

Oh--Mr. Mowry--you aint really leavin' are you? If you go away I'm quittin' here cause you're the only white man in the whoke family.

JOSEPHUS

Now, Minnie, you don't want to be doin' that; you need your job.

MINNIE

On not so much--my old man's got a break--and I was figurin' on quittin' in a week or so any way--just as soon as I see how he gets to goin'. He's in the bootleggin' business, and he's tied up with one of the biggest citizens in this town. This guy would never be suspicined by the revenuers. You see this respected citizen is puttin' up the money for my old man's trucks to run liqour in.

JOSEPHUS

Well, that's fine--Minnie--who is the feller, do I know him?

MINNIE

You sure do--don't say nothin', but my husband's partner in the bootleggin' business is none other than your honorable Cousin Elijah.

JOSEPHUS

(CHUCKLES) Well, I'll be dammed.

MINNIE

You see his name aint supposed to be connected with the dealin's in any way, but just the same he's the jink that's puttin' up the money. Aint he a hypocrite for you though. Him that goes around makin' everybody think he's so goody goody and he aint no better than my bootleggin' old man.

JOSEPHUS

Perty good. Well, Minnie, I'll be sayin' good-bye. Be careful of and don't drink too much of that home-made gin you make.

MINNIE

Oh I always am careful. Did I tell you? I just made a new batch of gin--and I'm only waitin' for results. I give George Washington a big shot of it and he's been singin' "It won't be long now."

JOSEPHUS

(LAUGHS) You want to watch out, Minnie, someday you'll give that parrot too much of that stuff and it'll knock him out. Well, I'm sorry to have to be leavin' just when you've turned off a new batch, but then maybe I'll write you and you can tell me how it turned out. (SLAPS HER ON THE BACK) Well, good bye, Minnie, old girl, I gotta get under way--

MINNIE

(CRYIN') Oh, Mr. Mowry, I never felt so sad since the night the twins were born. (EXITS L. SOBBING LOUDLY.)

JOSEPHUS

Everybody seems kinda' sad about me goin'--Oh well--(STARTS AS JOE ENTERS R. LOOKING VERY SAD AND DOWN IN THE MOUTH. ALSO NERVOUS) What's the matter with you, Joe---you look like the last rose of summer.

JOE

(COVERS HIS FACE AND SOBS SITS IN CHAIR) Oh it's nothing did--nothin'

I've just been a miserable horrible--rotten failure, that's all. Dad, I've got to tell you. I'm in trouble--terrible trouble. I took money that was trusted to me, I stole it from my firm, and then to save myself I stole mother's Express stocks to play a stock market tip, and it proved a bloomer. Oh I've been a fool. I've been a fool.

JOSEPHUS

You stole your mother's stock, and --and--Joe, your mother thinks I took that stock.

JOE

Oh, dad, I've been rotten.

JOSEPHUS

I've had my own times of feeling like a wormy apple. When I look at you now--I know what your mother thinks of me.

JOE

But I never thought that you'd be damned. I meant to put it back, and she'd thought it was just mislaid. (RISSES HYSTORICAL AGAIN) I'll tell her. I'll tell mother that I done it.

JOSEPHUS

Wait! Don't tell her nothin' yet. You've always fooled her and we've got to study to keep her fooled about you. It'd break her heart to know that the boy she loved was what you are. They don't know yet that you took the money at the office, do they?

JOE

The auditor will be there day after tomorrow--oh, dad it means jail for me.

JOSEPHUS

We'll have to get that money back. I--I wonder if Cousin Elijah could help us out.

JOE

No. I went to him first. It was him that I sold mother's stock to. I sold it to him for fourteen hundred dollars.

JOSEPHUS

How could you sell it? It was in her name.

JOE

Mother had given me power of attorney so I could attend to business for her, because--(STOPPS CONFUSED)

JOSEPHUS

Because she didn't trust me huh? And that old hypocritical saint of Cousin Elijah, got you to give him that stock. I see it all now. He took advantage of you, Joe--he knew you were weak and in trouble, he made you steal that stock. Oh, we got to get that money back in your office some way--as far as your mother's stock is concerned we can just let her go on thinkin' the way she does--that I took it.

JOE

No, dad, I've been rotten, but I'm not that rotten. I let mother have a wrong opinion of you when I was sure I'd pay it back--but now that I know it's gone--

quit thinkin' of yourself and me! Our feelin's don't amount to a damn. It's her that matters. Besides this thing aint all your doin's--it's part mine.

JOE

Yours?

JOSEPHUS

I'm your dad, and if I hadn't been--the kind of a man I've been--you mightn't be the kind of a boy you are. I never been exactly one of the twelve apostles, Joe, and you're--my son. You're one of my chickens that's come home to roost--singed.

JOE

It was my doins alone.

JOSEPHUS

Alone? I'm thinkin' that things don't work that way, Joe--nobody can do things, all alone--folks and their dads is all--all mixed up together--partners, and can't help it.

JOE

I'm a weak pardner.

JOSEPHUS

Yes, you 've got a dish rag for a spine--and mine aint much stiffer than an oyster. I aint much prouder of me, Joe than I am of you--and the Lord knows I ain't proud of you at all. I orter licked you more when you was a kid. I might a licked some of myself out of you and then you'd a' had a chance in life. I might be just as useless as you are if I had a father like yours. You can't help what was put into you afore you was born. And you've always seen me livin' loose and easy, too. As you sit there sniffling, Joe, you're the damnedest lesson I ever had--you poor miserable little whelp, you!

JOE

I am miserable. I'm in hell.

JOSEPHUS

You and me got a right to be in hell, Joe. That addition was opened up for settlers like us.

JOE

Oh, Dad, if I get out of this mess I'll go straight the rest of my life.

JOSEPHUS

I wish I was young and ignorant enough to promise that.

JOE

I'll go straight! I start right--I'll tell mother now. (ATTEMPTS TO RISE)

JOSEPHUS

(PUSHING HIM BACK) No, you won't. From now on you'll do what you're told to do. What she thinks of me, that's past all hopin' for. But what she thinks of you--mebby part of that can be saved for her yet.

COUSIN ALIJAH

(ENTERS R.) Oh I trust I do not intrude--

JOS APHUS
No, indeed you don't. You're just the one I want to see. Joe, stop that blubbering and get in the other room, and keep quiet and if you ever tell your mother what you done, I'll break every bone in your rubber neck. Get out! (PUSHES JOE OUT L.)

COUSIN
Why what is the matter with him?

JOS APHUS
You know what is the matter with him, you psalm singing hypocrite! He's in trouble--he's disgraced me--and that's somethin' hard do to do. He's a thief--and you made him one. You know what I'm talkin' about.

COUSIN
I don't. Josephus, you're acting--strange. You've been drinking too much.

JOS APHUS
You don't need to be worried because I'm drinkin' I've been drinkin' When I'm drinkin' I get good natured, Elijah. Why, if I was to take a notion to choke you, I'd do it in a perfectly good-natured way.

COUSIN
Stop your fooling and tell me what you want.

JOS APHUS
I want money, Elijah. I'm talkin' to you about trouble and money. Trouble that is, and trouble that is likely to come. Margot's in trouble. She's in worse trouble than she knows about.

COUSIN
What kind of trouble?

JOS APHUS
Through Joe. You know what Joe's trouble is. But Margot don't know. And she don't know he took her stock. Shenthinks I done it, and I'm gonna keep her thinkin' that to the end of her livin' days. If she found out about him, it would just be about the end of the world for her, and so you and me's gonna keep her from everyfindin' out what Joe's trouble is. (TAKES NEWSPAPER CUT OF POCKET) Do you see the paper--Elijah--there's the market page--Continental Express Company Stock closed at the highest bid of 'em all today in wall street. It closed at a hundred and twelve. Joe sold his mother's shares to you for fourteen hundred dollars. Now, Elijah, I want that other ten thousand from you.

COUSIN
Ten thousand! Are you ~~lightning~~ crazy, or joking?

JOS APHUS
Mebbe, I'm jokin', Elijah, mebby. I heard one time of a funny joke that some people pulled on a narrow minded, sheep eyed country banker like you. It was kinda funny--this feller was always pretendin' to be so good and holier than thou, but in reality he was nothin' but ~~admirably~~ sneakin' bootlegger--afraid to admit his callin'

COUSIN
Bootlegger? (STARTS)

JOS 2PH 15

14

Now don't get excited--I'm just tellin you what happened to this feller. You see the people in town got together and they thought it would be a funny joke to tar and feather him, and by hookey they did. (LAUGHS) Wasn't that funny?

COUSIN

I don't see anything funny in that at all. I--I think I'd better be leaving.

JOS. E. HUS

No you don't, Cousin Elijah, you're going to stay--until you give me that money you owe Margot.

COUSIN

I owe Margot:

JOS EPHUS

Listen, there's no use in you beatin' about the bush. You know you sold that stock today at the highest price. You knowed it was goin' up. You knowed the fix Joe was in, and you took advantage of it to get hold of that stock cheap. Morn' likely you tempted Joe to take it.

COUSIN

He had the power of attorney. It was a perfectly legal transaction.

JOSAPHUS

Legal? Of course it was legal. That's the difference between you and Joe. You always done your stealin' legal and now you're president of a bank. And he, the poor little sucker, is in line to go to jail. You don't mean to say you'd see Joe go to jail?

COUSIN

He's made his bed and he'll have to lie on it.

JOSAPHUS

S'pose he's made his mother's death bed, too? Will she have to lie on that? Elijah, your soul is so small that if there was a million souls the size of yours in a flesh's belly they'd be so far apart they couldn't hear each other holler.

COUSIN

This is an outrage. I won't listen to your drunken insults any longer. You w^{retched} old stew bum, I want to tell you that you'll not get one penny out of me--not one penny--and if you say much more I'll see that Joe goes to jail quicker than he might have to. (START

JOS EPHUS

Elijah, you step out that door and I'll squeel to the world what you really are.

Cousin

What I really am? What do you mean?

JOSPHUS

I mean that aside from being the highly respected president of the bank here, you have usideline, and that line is bootleggin'.

Riduculous! Me a bootlegger, Why I never touch the filthy stuff. I've voted a dry ticket from the beginning. In fact I was one of the first to rally to the cause of temperance.

JOSEPHUS

You bet your life. This country is filled with just such sour faced crepe hanging, psalm signing hypocrites who are always fighting for the cause of prohibition with one hand and filling up their own cellars with the other. It's you and the likes of you that made this country dry--not because you think liquor is a curse, but because you can make more money with prohibition, and this country will never amount to a damn till the citizens get together and string the whole bunch of you to the highest slippery elm tree in the land!

COUSIN

You're tryin' to black mail me. I'm not in the bootleggin' business. And you can't prove it if it I was. You have no proof.

JOSEPHUS

Oh aint I. Minnie. Minnie. Come here a minute. (SHE ENTERS) Minnie who's your husband's pardner in that bootleggin' deal of his.

MINNIE

(LOOKS AT COUSIN ELIJAH WHO TRIES TO SHUT HER UP) Why he is of course

JOSEPHUS

That'll do, Minnie. (SHE EXITS) Now you see how wise I am to your little tricks, Elijah---you're hooked and there aint no use tryin' to wiggle out of it---you're just up that well known little creek without a paddle.

COUSIN

This is black mail--blackmail!

JOSEPHUS

Blackmail and robbery and anything else you want to call it. I don't care. Do I get Margot's money. Do I get ten thousand dollars?

COUSIN

Do you think I'm going to let you get away with this. You were talkin' about ~~makink~~ story where a country banker got the worst of it, well I might tell you a story where a drunken bum got the worst of it. Your name means nothing in this town. Why I could shoot you down in cold blood and say it was to protect myself from you and everyone would believe me, and by heaven that's what I'll do--(REACHES IN BACK POCKET FOR GUN)

JOSEPHUS

(HAND IN POCKET) Don't reach for it, Cousin Elijah, I got you covered and I'll give you just ten seconds for your answer. Do I get that dough or do I not?

COUSIN

Oh you--yes--how will you have it? In a check?

JOSEPHUS

Oh no--cash brother--cash. I want it in bills. Hundred dollar bills a hundred of 'em.

COUSIN

I haven't got the ~~the~~ here.

We'll go to the bank and get 'em. About face. Forward march, and remember I've got you covered. (COUSIN ELIJIAH TURNS ABOUT PUTS ON HAT AND MARCHES UP TO DOOR AND OUT. JOSEPHUS PULLS OUT HAND FROM POCKET AND SHOWS HE HAD NOTHING BUT A CORN COB PIEE AND SINGS) Rock of Ages clef for me--(AS HE EXITS R.)

***** NUMBER THREE *****

JOE

(FOLLOWS MARGOT ON) Mother, I--I've got a confession to make to you. I can't keep it from you any longer. I know you're going to hate me when I tell you, but I don't care--mother, I'm a thief--a dirty thief I stole your shares of stock myself---I stole them to play a tip I had on the market. Do you hear me mother--I--I'm the one who stole them?

MARGOT

(STUNNED) Joe--Joe what are you saying? You--you mean you stole those
sotocks and then let me believe that I did of your father. Oh, Joe,
Joe--you're not telling me the truth--you can't be.

JOB

(COVERS FACE) I am, mother. God help me I am!

MARGOT

The boy I loved and trusted--a thief! And to think I let your father go! (PHYLISS ENTERS CRYING) Well, what's the matter with you, Phyliss?

PHYLISS

It's Sam--and me--we broke our engagement. We're not going to be married. He knows about father stealing your stocks, and he--well--he said things about dad--and I--oh mother I was so ashamed I didn't know what to do--(DROPS IN CHAIR SOBBING)

MARGOT

PHYLISS

Mother--

MARGOT

Don't answer me back. You haven't appreciated your father, either of you. You've treated him as if he weren't as good as you. But he's better! He's a thousand times better. -Oh I know that I was hard on him because I loved him. All the time he knew it was Joe--and he was willing to take the disgrace to save me--while I was unjustly accusing him. Oh I am ashamed. Ashamed of myself, and both of you. He is better I tell you than any of us, and we have been blind, and haven't seen it. To think--to think he would have gone on to his grave, letting me think my son was innocent just to save me pain! Oh I've got a notion to whip you both.

PEYLISS

But mother we didn't send him away --

MARGOT

No but you never stopped him. O h he

gone, and we'll never see him again. I'll never see him again-- 17
the dear sweet whiskey drinkin' lovable old devil. Oh I loved him--
I never knew how much I loved him--

PHYLISS

We all loved him.

MARGOT

I loved him from the top of his whiskey smellin' breath to the souls
of his stinkin' feet, and I sent him away. (DROPS DOWN HEAD ON TABLE
CRYING AND*) And now he's gone--he'll never come--back--he may be
hundreds of miles away. (PAUSE. THEN JOSEPHUS IS HEARD SINGING ROCK
OF AGES OFF STAGE. SHE RAISES HER HEAD) Listen!

JOSEPHUS

(ENTERS. MAKES STRAIGHT FOR THE TABLE.?SMILES. TAKES OFF HAT AND
BEGINS POURING OUT HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS ON THE TABLE AS HE SINGS ROCK
OF AGES) Hello, Margot--honey--

MARGOT

Oh Josephus--what have you done?

JOSEPHUS

All of you wonderin' where the money come from, aint you? None of
you thought that invention of mine would amount to anything, did you?
(LOOKING AT HER) You--you act as if you didn't believe me, ma.

MARGOT

(SMILING) I don't, Josephus.

JOSEPHUS

That comes of not having any business head on you, Margot--so you don't
believe I got that money from my invention? Well, I'll tell you the
honest injun truth then, ma. That money didn't come from my invention
at all. That money come through my bein' a darned smart business man
and watchin' the papers, and keepin' in touch with things, and knowin'
what's what generally. Margot, that there stock of you're mentionin'
been layin' around the house for two or three years really was worth
somethin' after all! I seed it was gonna go up in the market, and so
sez I to my self, sez I, "Now I'll just sneak that stock out and we'll
sell it for me and surprise her. And that's what I done, Margot.
You got a little bit fussed over missin' it, but I never mindin'
that an'--Margot--

MARGOT

(INTERRUPTING GENTLY) It was all a surprise you planned for me, was it,
Josephus? (LOOKING AT JOE) Did--did my boy Joe know anything about it

JOSEPHUS

Not a word. That is, right at the start he didn't. Later I kinda
consulted him for advice. Yes sir, and he manipulated the market for
us, ma, and he spent considerable money doin' it, so sez I I jest
believe Joe ought to have a couple of thousand for his services. Joe,
come on over and pick yourself out a couple of thousand--that's for
manipulatin' the market--and--and-- (LOOKING AT MARGOT)

MARGOT

Josephus, you're an awful old liar!

JOSEPHUS

Me, ma? Well, I guess I aint so honest as some folks.

MARGOT
I don't believe a word you've been saying.

JOSEPHUS
Well, now, Margot the truth is--

MARGOT
(INTERRUPTING WOOING HIM BY HER MANNER) Josephus, in all our thirty years of married life you never have deceived me, and you don't deceive me now. Josephus, I know. I know all about it. (JOSEPHUS ACTS EMBARRASSED AND ASHAMED. PHYLISS AND JOE CROWD AROUND HIM)

JOSEPHUS
Joe, what did you do--did you-- Son, have I been doin' all this lyin for nothin--

MARGOT
Never mind, Josephus, I know all about everything and I'm not hurt now--I'm happy that I've got you back.

PHYLISS AND JOE
We all are dad. (THEY ALL PUT ARMS AROUND HIM)

JOSEPHUS
There now I never seen such a darn family! Whew! I've had quite a day--Kinda makes me tired--I--

MARGOT
I know what you need--Josephus--you need a drink--I'll go see if Minnie has got one.

JOSEPHUS
My Lord, Margot, you don't mean to tell me you'd go get me a drink, do you?

MARGOT
Yes, Josephus, from now on I'm going give you whatever you want--- Can you tell me anything else you want?

JOSEPHUS
Well, I--'(YAWNS A LITTLE BIT) I can't right now--it aint bed time yet.

MARGOT
(SMILES) Oh Josephus. I'll get you that drink. (CALLS OFF) Oh Minnie Minnie, come here. (MINNIE ENTERS) Minnie, have you anything to drink If you have bring it up to Mr. Mowry--he's going to stay at home, and he's rather tired and I think a little drink will do him good--

MINNIE
(LOOKING AT JOSEPHUS) Does she mean it--Mr Mowry--is she tellin' me to give you a drink---

JOSEPHUS
I reckon she is, Minnie--bring me a little drink in a quart tumbler-- I'll try some of that new gin you made--how did it come out?

MINNIE
(BEGINS TO CRY) Oh Mr. Mowry I'm almost ashamed to tell you--it's awful just awful--

JOSEPHUS
Why Minnie what's the matter?

MINNIE
Oh, it's my poor poll parrot, George Washington.

JOSEPHUS

What's the matter with him?

MINNIE

Oh it's just terrible, Mr. Mowry. For ten years I've thought that my ~~black~~ George Washington was a gentleman parrot.

JOSEPHUS

Aint he? What's he done?

MINNIE

Oh it's just awful. I gave him two drinks of thatootch and he---
Mr. Mowry---he laid a egg!

F I N A L E.